

## **GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT PROJECT JUSTIFICATION NARRATIVE**

This is a General Plan Amendment request on an approximately one (1) acre residential property at the northwest corner of Sundown Drive and Shea Boulevard to change the Land Use from Rural Neighborhoods to Office (Minor). The property is adjacent to Shea Boulevard and receives the full impacts of its traffic activity and noise on the main living area of the home. Across Shea to the south is a large church complex. There are single family homes to the east, north and west.

The existing home is thus on the edge of the residential neighborhood to the north and acts as a buffer to that neighborhood from the severe traffic impacts of Shea Boulevard. The primary obstacle to attracting reinvestment in older homes on major thoroughfares such as Shea Boulevard is the ever-increasing traffic on these roads and the resistance of homebuyers to front onto a heavily traveled street with its accompanying safety hazards, difficulty of access and noise impacts. Because such homes no longer offer a desirable quality of life for residents, no one is interested in purchasing them and renovating them for use as a residence.

The proposed General Plan Amendment from Rural Neighborhoods to Office (Minor) offers the opportunity for the existing single family home to be renovated and used for a small medical office.

Scottsdale's General Plan document itself provides guidance to its use in circumstances in which homes along major arterials frontages become unlivable. The substantial re-investment required to bring the home up to the desired aesthetics of the area cannot be justified without a change of use. No one has been willing to make major improvements to homes along this area of Shea Blvd. for residential purposes. The traffic impacts make the property totally unsuitable as a home.

The General Plan represents goals and policies to guide the community over a 20 to 25 year period.... There is a natural tendency to presume that the Plan as adopted will be applied in its entirety with minimal change over that period of time. But, such rigid application would not be responsive to the natural changes and unforeseen opportunities that arise in a community as dynamic as Scottsdale. Making long-range decisions means that issues need to be periodically readdressed to reflect new or emerging circumstances.

As with any flexible policy document, there is room for interpretation on the policies and goals contained in these elements, and flexibility is needed to meet the overall objectives. (pp. 11-12)

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The General Plan also states that it is designed to be a “a broad, flexible document that changes as the community needs, conditions and direction change.” (p. 17) One of the areas in which changed conditions and community needs has surfaced and will continue to surface more and more in the future is along increasingly heavily traveled major arterials. More mature neighborhoods and housing stock in the City will increasingly require re-investment for remodeling and improvements to maintain quality and desirability. The General Plan recognizes the increasing importance of neighborhood revitalization and upgrading: “. . . revitalization will become a major focus of activity in the community.” (p. 37)

This request for a change in land use designation from Rural Neighborhoods to Office (Minor) addresses a long deteriorating Shea frontage. It is an area in need of investment, but facing the substantial impediment of increasing resistance to living on Shea Blvd. “Rigid application” of the General Plan is not “responsive” to changed conditions when homes that once fronted peaceful streets are now adjacent to six lane urban thoroughfares.

One of the Community Values on the very first page of General Plan 2001 expresses the vision of Scottsdale being a community that “Creates, revitalizes and preserves neighborhoods that have long-term viability” and that fit with other neighborhoods “to form an exceptional Citywide quality of life.”

Because of the severe deleterious impacts to the properties along Shea, homes like this one cannot offer the quiet, low traffic, rural, acre lot residential experience and exceptional quality of life as do the interior homes in the subdivision. Homes along a major street can detract from the interior subdivision making it appear old, dated, rundown and undesirable. Owners cannot continue to invest in improvements when no improvements are able to solve the basic non-livability of the home. Homebuyers want to be within a quiet residential area, not in a home next to a highly traveled street which unquestionably detracts from the quality of life. Without a change in the General Plan designation and zoning of this area, it is likely to continue to deteriorate and detract from the value of homes on the interior of the subdivision.

Providing appropriate transition and buffering by maintaining the existing homes on the heavily traveled roadway edges of neighborhoods in Scottsdale has proven essential in stabilizing adjacent interior residential neighborhoods. This stabilization of “edges” has resulted in reinvestment that eliminates deterioration and assemblages within the adjacent interior residential neighborhoods. As edges are protected and as homeowners invest in interior residential properties, the increased single family values make the homes more desirable and too costly to assemble for rezoning. This stabilizing and preserving influence of buffering roadway edge development has been experienced along other portions of Shea Boulevard, the Hayden – 84<sup>th</sup> Street area, for example, along Scottsdale, Camelback and Thomas Roads and other major arterials. In these areas, the adjacent interior residential neighborhoods have been strengthened by appropriate protection of the edges, have attracted reinvestment in their older homes, have ultimately experienced increased property values.

The proposed amendment would allow the existing home to be transformed into a far more attractive property while maintaining its residential character and appearance. The reinvestment in the area to upgrade the property would strengthen and protect the adjacent single family residential neighborhood, enhance surrounding property values and prevent the deterioration and lower values that occur when properties cannot be maintained to offer the quality of life desired by home buyers.

#### **GENERAL PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES.**

- **Character & Lifestyle**

The character and lifestyle of Scottsdale is always enhanced by appropriate reinvestment in older neighborhoods, particularly with compatible uses. Reinvestment in older neighborhoods likewise enhances the economic vitality of the community and contributes to a higher property tax base. Quality of life is an important community-wide value that is increasingly difficult to preserve in homes along this area of Shea Boulevard. The proposed re-use and improvement of this home will protect the edge of adjacent residential neighborhoods, and thus provide stability and preservation of the existing acre lot residential neighborhoods in the area. The small medical office use will be a compatible neighbor allowing the property to be improved in a way that will enhance the entry to the Sundown Drive homes. This reinvestment in the area and the stabilizing of adjacent neighborhoods will result in enhanced property values for the surrounding residential areas and will also encourage reinvestment in the older homes in the interior of the subdivision, thus contributing to the neighborhood overall stability.
- **Economic Vitality**
- **Neighborhoods**
- **Open Space**

Open space will be maintained on the lot and along Shea. The goals of sustainability and effective management of resources are served by re-use of a badly impacted home that is no longer habitable because of Shea Boulevard. The change in use proposed in this General Plan Amendment and accompanying rezoning of the property does not place any significant burden on existing infrastructure and would contribute significantly to the tax base to sustain existing infrastructure. The proposed General Plan Amendment and rezoning advance transportation goals by providing needed medical services close to homes with low intensity use for which the traffic increase is well within existing street capacity of the area.
- **Sustainability**
- **Transportation**

## **GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS**

### **Character and Design Element.**

The General Plan itself states that “Character can cross land uses and zoning ....” (p. 43) The renovation and reuse of the existing home can be done in a way that enhances and does not detract from the rural character of the adjacent neighborhood by maintaining and upgrading the home. As the General Plan states, “Thus, from a ‘character’ perspective, the challenge is. . . to ensure aesthetic appeal.”(p. 40) The aesthetic appeal of the area will be enhanced with the renovated home.

### **Land Use Element.**

The proposed General Plan Amendment furthers the citywide land use policy of ensuring that neighborhood edges transition to one another with an appropriate land use and development pattern reflective of the character of the surrounding area. This is a location contiguous to existing development at which City services are readily available. The proposed land use change maintains the existing home with a small office use housed in a residential structure that provides a reasonable buffer to the adjacent neighborhood.

### **Economic Vitality Element.**

The proposed General Plan Amendment advances the economic vitality goal of sustaining the long-term economic well being of the City through redevelopment and revitalization efforts. One of the economic vitality policies of the General Plan is to encourage and support renovation and reuse of underutilized or undesirable residential properties such as exist in this area along Shea. This proposal is an appropriate private redevelopment and revitalization effort of the kind intended to be encouraged under the economical vitality policies of the General Plan. The proposal helps to maintain the quality of the interior subdivision, thus contributing to the City’s quality of life and the stability of its economy.

### **Community Involvement Element.**

Prior to embarking upon this General Plan Amendment and related rezoning, the applicant went door-to-door to adjacent owners and distributed letters to his neighbors advising them of his intent. Through group meetings with the surrounding neighbors and open house, the proposal will be discussed and changes made based upon any concerns expressed for high quality design, maintenance of residential character/single-story and property value enhancement.

**Housing Element.**

This Housing Plan Element recognizes that attention will need to be focused on the revitalization and preservation of more mature housing neighborhoods and that the community will need “to seek creative infill development strategies.” (p. 96) This proposal for the reuse of an existing home on a major street in a mature neighborhood while maintaining its residential appearance will contribute to the Housing Element goal of revitalization of an older Scottsdale neighborhood and encouragement of the interior homeowners to reinvest and renovate their homes, also consistent with Housing Element goals.

**Neighborhoods Element.**

The proposed General Plan Amendment meets the Neighborhoods Element goals of reinvesting in Scottsdale’s mature neighborhoods which the General Plan describes as, “critical to maintaining and strengthening the health, safety, prosperity and enjoyment of our community.” (p. 104) The proposal offers revitalization that prevents the decline of aging areas and provides “context-appropriate infill development.” (p. 104) Neighborhoods appropriately include convenient services that the small medical office use will provide. The Neighborhoods Element recognizes that residential deterioration in mature neighborhoods reflects negatively on the community as a whole and encourages revitalization efforts such as the one proposed to provide for long-term stability of the City’s mature residential neighborhoods. Infill developments such as the one proposed are encouraged under this element of the General Plan.

**Open Space and Recreation Element.**

This request does not impact the Open Space and Recreation Element of the General Plan

**Preservation and Environmental Planning Element.**

The request is consistent with the Preservation and Environmental Planning Element of the General Plan because the small medical office use in an in-town location will contribute to trip reduction as well as reduced energy consumption and thus aid in the improvement of air quality.

**Cost of Development Element.**

The proposed development is consistent with the Cost of Development Element of the General Plan because it provides needed services in an area with existing infrastructure and contributes to the property tax base to sustain that infrastructure.

**Growth Area Element.**

There is no impact of the proposed General Plan Amendment on the Growth Area Element of the General Plan.

**Public Services and Facilities Element.**

This General Plan Amendment is consistent with the Public Services and Facilities Element because it provides needed medical services in an area of the City already well served by public services and facilities. The proposal will not negatively impact the provision of these services or the use of these facilities.

**Community Mobility Element.**

The proposal is consistent with the Community Mobility Element goals of relieving traffic congestion and emphasizing live, work and play land use relationships because of its infill location.

**SCENIC/VISTA CORRIDORS, CHARACTER AREA/NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS  
HOUSING/ECONOMIC DIVERSITY, TRANSPORTATION ACCESSIBILITY/MODES**

The proposed General Plan Amendment does not impact any Scenic or Vista Corridors or any adopted Character Area or Neighborhood Plans. Housing and economic diversity as well as transportation accessibility/modes are discussed above under the General Plan Elements section.

**NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES**

The neighbors and homeowners associations have generally been concerned about the General Plan Amendment and companion rezoning proposal on this one (1) acre site potentially negatively impacting their property. The key issues with respect to this General Plan Amendment that have been identified by the surrounding neighborhoods include: 1) change in character of the area, 2) traffic generation, 3) commercial use, and 4) impact on property values.

To address these concerns, the applicant proposes to maintain and improve the existing house and direct traffic away from the neighborhood. Heavy landscaping can be used to buffer adjacent properties and appropriate signage could be provided to identify the entry to Sundown

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Ranch Estates. By providing a viable, economic use of the home as opposed to trying to maintain a non-livable residence, further deterioration of the area along Shea will be prevented, and interior homeowners will be energized to re-invest in their homes with a far more attractive appearance of the subdivision along Shea.

## IMPACT ANALYSIS.

The proposed change includes approximately one (1) acre of land zoned for one (1) home-per-acre that would change from Rural Neighborhoods to Minor Office allowing approximately 4,800 square feet of medical office use. The proposed General Plan Amendment and rezoning does not increase population and eliminates demand for schools from this property. The increase in vehicle trips per day would be estimated at 163 trips, again well within the roadway capacities. An increase of approximately seven (7) employees would be associated with this change. Overall the impacts of this change are negligible on a City with an area of 185 square miles, 219,200 residents, and a broad land use and residential housing mix; the impacts of not making the change are far more potentially negative.

- If this a General Plan land use amendment the proposed change includes one (1) acre/dwelling unit/square footage changing from General Plan land use designation Rural Neighborhoods to General Plan land use designation Office (Minor).
- The estimated increase or decrease in population this proposed General Plan amendment will create is 2 - 4 (underscore one – increase or decrease or no change).
- The estimated increase or decrease in elementary, middle and high school age children this proposed General Plan amendment will create is 2 - 3 (circle one – increase or decrease or no change).
- The estimated impact this proposed General Plan change will have on water use per year will be minimal (underscore one – increase or decrease or no change).
- The estimated impact this proposed General Plan change will have on wastewater generation per year is minimal (underscore one – increase or decrease or no change).
- The estimated impact this proposed General Plan change will have on solid waste generation per year is minimal/tons (underscore one – increase or decrease or no change).
- The estimated impact this proposed General Plan change will have on vehicle trips per day is 163 (underscore one – increase or decrease or no change).
- The estimated number of employees this proposed General Plan change will result in is seven (7) (underscore one – increase or decrease or no change).